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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000779

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ML](#)
SUBJECT: MALI AND ADC CONTENT TO LEAVE BAHANGA BEHIND IN
THE LIBYAN DUST

REF: A. 06 BAMAKO 00898
[B](#). BAMAKO 00712
[C](#). BAMAKO 00675

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary. Negotiations between the Malian government and the Tuareg rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) appear to be on track one week after a second round of talks, held August 28-30, in Algiers. A meeting of the nine-person Algiers Accords Oversight Committee is scheduled for September 15 in Kidal. The Committee has been largely inactive since Bahanga began attacking Malian military units over one year ago. The ADC, which released the last of its 21 Malian military "prisoners" on August 16, intends to gather in Tegharghar on September 10 to prepare for the Committee meeting. The installation, composition and command of one Kidal-based mixed military unit is expected to be agenda item number one for both the ADC in Tegharghar and the Oversight Committee in Kidal. Mali, the ADC and Algeria appear content to move ahead without the participation of Ibrahim Bahanga, who veered once again toward Libya and Qadhafi just days before the last meeting in Algiers. Although Bahanga continues to hold an estimated 65 Malian soldiers hostage, the recent defections of Bahanga's two key deputies - Hassan Fagaga and Mohamed ag Aharib - back to the ADC have significantly weakened Bahanga's position. End Summary.

A Sept. 15 Date in Kidal

2.(C) Preparations are underway for a Sept. 15 meeting of the Algiers Accords Oversight Committee in Kidal. This Committee was created in 2006 and includes three representatives each from Mali, Algeria and the ADC (Ref. A). The ADC's three representatives are Kidal Chamber of Commerce president Abdousalam ag Assalat, newly returned ADC member Mohamed ag Aharib and Captain Haroun ag Saghid. The three representatives from the Malian side are Police Controller and Committee Chairman Mahamadou Diagouraga, Paratrooper Colonel Eloi Togo and Customs Officer Moulaye Hamed Ould Moulaye Riggani. The Algerian Committee members in 2006 were Lt. Col. Ouadahi Achour, Commandant Zemali El-Hadj and Adjutant Sakhri Youcef. Two other Algerians, Commandant Meckour Azedine and Lt. Benasia Kahled Oualid, served as Committee alternates. We do not know whether the composition of the Algerian delegation has changed.

3.(C) The Sept. 15 date was set during the Aug. 28-30 meeting between the Malian government and ADC in Algiers. Tuareg groups met in Bourghessa on August 25-26 to hash out who would travel to Algiers to meet with the Malian delegation and Algerian mediators. Tuaregs present at the Bourghessa meeting included ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi, Bah

Moussa, Hassan Fagaga, Bayen Ag Ahawali, Sidi Mohamed ag Douad (AKA "19"), Ada Massamad, Magdi Bahada and Mohamed ag Aharib. Ibrahim Bahanga and his father in law, Hama ag Sid'Ahamed, were invited to participate but failed to show. Two of Bahanga's key deputies, however, Fagaga and ag Aharib, accepted the ADC invitation and now appear to be once again within the ADC camp.

4.(U) On August 30 the Malian Prime Minister's office issued a brief statement summarizing the August 28-30 meeting in Algiers. The statement confirmed an agreement to regroup, under the aegis of the Oversight Committee, in Kidal on September 15. It also reiterated Mali and the ADC's commitment to de-mine areas mined by Bahanga, return weapons and materials taken from the Malian army during rebel attacks, and facilitate the return of civilian populations displaced by fighting. The statement concluded by noting that the next "tripartite" meeting would occur at a place and date to be determined and would examine recommendations proposed by the Oversight Committee.

5.(C) One of the Oversight Committee's key agenda items will likely be the composition, command and responsibilities of one mixed military unit now to be based in Kidal. Although the Malians and ADC apparently agreed to base this unit in Kidal - as opposed to Tinzawaten as demanded previously by Bahanga (Ref. B) - details on the size and scope of the unit are unknown. The ADC is regrouping in Tegharghar on September 10 to prepared for the Committee meeting in Kidal five days later. ADC Commandant Bah Moussa seems to be leading Tuareg candidate for command of the newly formed mixed unit.

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Bahanga Who?

6.(C) Mali, the ADC and Algeria appear content to ignore Ibrahim Bahanga while proceeding with Algiers Accords implementation. One Tuareg contact, Acherif ag Mohamed, told the Embassy that Bahanga's refusal to participate in the most recent talks in Algiers and decision to turn, once again, toward Tripoli was actually a relief to both the ADC and Algeria for it meant that Bahanga was once again Qadhafi's problem. On September 9 Kader Bah, a close confidant of President Toure, described the situation with Bahanga in similar terms. He said that Bahanga had further isolated himself, was no longer an integral part of the peace process, and that Algeria judged Bahanga of little value in terms of countering AQIM.

7.(C) The August 17 release of 21 Malian soldiers by the ADC, and the August 24 release of three other Malians by a group that describes itself as the "United Forces of the Azawad" (Ref. C), left Bahanga as the only Tuareg rebel still holding Malian soldiers. Bahanga still has approximately 65 Malians soldiers in captivity. He released two captives on August 25 and one more on August 26, all for medical reasons. Rumors regarding an impending decision by Bahanga to release the hostages to Qadhafi in Tripoli continue to circulate. Many thought Bahanga would time the release to coincide with Libya's September 1 celebration of Qadhafi's rise to power.

Comment: Isolating Bahanga

8.(C) By turning to Libya, then Algeria, and back to Libya again, Bahanga appears to have done Mali, Algeria and his estranged Tuareg rebel colleagues a huge favor by effectively taking himself out of the Algiers Accords implementation process. Although he still holds more than 60 Malian soldiers hostage, his control over anything more than his

home base of Tinzawaten was greatly weakened by the defections of Fagaga and ag Aharib. Tuaregs and Malian officials seem convinced that Bahanga is waiting for a Libyan payoff in order to release his captives. In the meantime, neither Mali, Algeria nor the ADC appear to see any problems with moving ahead with negotiations as though Bahanga had completely ceased to exist.

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